

Chilean Morenoites promote illusions in Constitutional Convention

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Maria Rivera, leader of a group known as the International Workers Movement (MIT), the Chilean section of the Morenoite International Workers League-Fourth International (LIT-CI), is being promoted by the mainstream media under conditions of a volatile political and social situation.

Rivera, who won a seat in the Constitutional Convention running as an independent in the motley anti-party People's List, has been given an extraordinary amount of airtime over the last two months, appearing in several debates and on talk shows, something that would have been unheard of prior to the anti-capitalist demonstrations in 2019 and the political chasm that it has laid bare.

She has appeared in a debate with right-wing and Social Party constituents on *CHV Noticias*, and she appeared in “Mentiras Verdaderas” of the television platform *La Red*. Rivera appeared on “Aquí se Debate” transmitted by *CNN Chile*. She gave a three-quarter-page interview to the arch-conservative *El Mercurio*, spoken to *La Nación*, the “left” *El Ciudadano* and several other periodicals.

Behind this media attention are the calculations of the Chilean bourgeoisie as it tries to rebuild legitimacy for the thoroughly discredited capitalist state through the establishment of the Constitutional Convention. New political forces are being created and others strengthened to deal with the electoral annihilation suffered by the old and deeply hated political caste that emerged in the transition from military to civilian rule three decades ago. All of the state institutions and the traditional political parties remain deeply unpopular.

This crisis of rule has only sharpened since the COVID-19 pandemic, as the coalition of right-wing parties of Sebastián Piñera's administration have done next to nothing to alleviate the pandemic's impact upon the working-class sectors amid the worst health, social and economic crisis in decades.

With the old center-left coalition—which included the Socialist Party, the Christian Democrats, the Radicals and the Party for Democracy—also in tatters, the bourgeoisie is actively promoting a gamut of so-called independents and non-party-aligned forces that emerged to hold a strong position in the constituent assembly. Many have become involved in politics for the first time as a result of the historic protests and the horrific crackdown that followed. Untested and relatively unknown, these elements are being sized up by the ruling class to determine which will be useful in ensnaring the working class back into parliamentary politics.

This is especially urgent because the working class has to date abstained in large numbers from the electoral process. There was an average turnout of only 22 percent in primaries held in July in the runup to this year's presidential elections.

The Frente Amplio (FA), or Broad Front, formed an electoral alliance with the Stalinist Communist Party (PCCh) and advanced two candidates in the pseudo-left primaries. FA ran Gabriel Bori?, former student leader and a deputy in the lower house, who received one million votes to the 692,862 obtained by Daniel Jadue, PCCh member and mayor of Recoleta, a community in Santiago.

Within the right wing, the Chile Vamos coalition held primaries on the same weekend in mid-July. Not one of the four candidates matched either Bori?'s or Jadue's votes. Sebastián Sichel, a relatively unknown who served as Piñera's Minister for Social Development, came the closest winning 659,570 ballots.

The FA coalition is itself an unstable and ever-changing amalgam of middle-class radical, feminist, ecological and libertarian parties that emerged from the student rebellions of the last decade. Many of its student leaders have since integrated themselves into posts in academia, the union bureaucracy, the civil service and the legislature. Hence their significant vote among a more well-off constituency, predominantly made up of the young, professional middle class.

The primaries also demonstrated the Frente Amplio's flagging support in poor and marginalized working-class sectors of Santiago. While the upper middle class eastern communities of Las Condes, Vitacura, Lo Barnechea registered between 40 and 55 percent participation in the July primaries, in the working-class Santiago communities with multidimensional poverty of up to 25 percent, less than a quarter voted. This class divide is repeated across the country.

This was also revealed in a publicity stunt that could have ended much worse than it did. At the end of July, Bori? visited anti-government protesters languishing in the Santiago 1 penitentiary for up to 22 months either awaiting trial or serving hefty sentences. The pseudo-left presidential candidate intended to take advantage of growing demands for an amnesty for thousands of predominantly working-class prisoners detained on trumped up charges for participating in the 2019 protests.

Rather than being treated the hero, Bori? was heckled and jeered by the relatives of the framed-up protesters. Undaunted, he proceeded inside the jail—without being invited—and was accosted before guards interceded and got him out. The following day a group calling themselves “Political Prisoners of the Revolt” leaked a communiqué rebuking the candidate.

“We prisoners were not informed of his visit. It seems to us a profound lack of respect that a person, who played an active part in the enactment of repressive laws and the hardening of penalties associated with the social outbreak, visited,” the prisoners declared.

“The aggression (Bori? suffered) is a consequence of his actions and his political dilettantism that has led him to make pacts... that have led

to the terrible living conditions that forced the people to rise up against so much injustice, among them: the Agreement for Peace, the anti-barricade law, anti-sabotage law.”

The student protests initiated in October 2019 over public transport fees became a mass anti-capitalist movement involving millions of students, youth, workers and the middle class against decades of extreme social inequality, police violence and, in particular, as a reaction to President Piñera’s authoritarian crackdown. A state of emergency was called for the first time since the military dictatorship, with armed forces patrolling the streets.

The protests became increasingly confrontational as the entire repressive apparatus was unleashed against workers and youth, with dozens killed or disappeared, hundreds suffering severe traumas, injuries and mutilations. Cases of beatings, sexual violence, rape and torture began to be committed with impunity—34 cases of which are today based on charges of “crimes against humanity” presented at the International Criminal Court by the crusading Judge Baltasar Garzón against Piñera and civilian and military authorities.

It was under these conditions that Bori? and a number of other FA congressmen joined with the parliamentary extreme right, centre and left parties in an “Agreement for Social Peace and a New Constitution,” as a cynical means of diffusing the situation and sidetracking anti-capitalist sentiment into calls to reform the authoritarian charter. In the same breath, these pseudo-left forces also lent their support to a series of authoritarian bills criminalizing social protest.

The MIT lends its support to the capitalist state

Maria Rivera of the Morenoite MIT is a lawyer and founder of the defense group “Defensoría Popular” involved in providing legal defense to framed up prisoners from Maoist guerrilla outfits, such as the Movement of the Revolutionary Left (MIR) and the Manuel Rodríguez Patriotic Front (FPMR), as well as several anarchists. Previously a member of the MIR herself, Rivera was captured and tortured by the secret police before being exiled to Argentina in 1983. There she joined the Morenoite Movement for Socialism (MAS), then part of a popular front coalition with the Stalinist Communist Party of Argentina, before returning back to Chile in 1990 with the transition to civilian rule. She has remained in the LIT-CI ever since, forming the MIT as its Chilean section.

In other words, this is a person with a long track record in Latin American centrist and national opportunist politics that masquerades as socialism. Politicians of her stripe use revolutionary sounding phraseology and claim to belong to the Trotskyist Fourth International, but their historic function has been to tie the working class to various forms of petty-bourgeois and bourgeois nationalism.

In its 70 years of existence, the political tendency identified as Pabloism, along with its Latin American variant Morenoism, has sown illusions in bourgeois nationalist caudillos such as Juan Domingo Perón or bourgeois reformists of the Salvador Allende type. It has swung from backing petty-bourgeois Castroite guerrillism to entering Popular Front-style coalitions with Stalinists, both with disastrous results. Its principal function is to keep the working class subordinated to bourgeois nationalism and the capitalist state in Latin America, which has led to bloody defeats time and again.

By participating in the Constitutional Convention, Rivera’s actions demonstrate that the Morenoites will once again attempt to tie the working class to the capitalist state. That is why her services are in demand.

In November 2019, the MIT claimed it was opposed to the Peace Accord, called for the downfall of the Piñera administration, made appeals to expropriate Chile’s wealthiest families and filed a suit against Piñera for crimes against humanity in the Chilean courts.

“We will not be in any constituent process while the prisons are filled with young people from the front line (of the social protests),” Rivera claimed. She called for the immediate release of all political prisoners, adding that the mission was “to defeat the Piñera government.”

A year later in a statement in the MIT press, Rivera was saying that “it is important to participate in the Constituent Process. ... It is crucial to have candidates who represent the revolution and who refuse to sell false promises, but rather are clear in saying that the only way we can change our lives is through struggle.”

Six months later, in May of this year, the MIT was writing: “We are going to the Constituent Assembly to use this front more to fight, not to negotiate agreements with the same old (parties)...”

Yet to *Resumen* she said: “There is no possibility of negotiating with the traditional parties, as long as they do not adopt these demands; it makes no sense, at least I am not willing to negotiate the freedom of political prisoners...”

And to *El Mercurio*: “If we achieve that a popular majority makes a mobilization, a general strike, we can demand the Convention decree the release of political prisoners by the means discussed. For us this is a relentless fight. With this political prison I assure you that Chile’s problems will not begin to be solved.”

By the second day of the Constitutional Convention in July, Rivera’s incendiary proclamations vanished like a puff of smoke.

“I regret that in the speech (of president of the convention, Mapuche leader) Elisa Loncón did not remember to reject or repudiate the repression and to demand the freedom of political prisoners. ... Otherwise it is a progressive speech; besides it talks about deepening democracy. The truth is that this state of things must be changed and not deepen the miserable democracy we have.”

For all the revolutionary bravura, the fact is that Rivera, the MIT and rest of the pseudo-left are as terrified as the entire capitalist state is to the uncharted waters they are entering. The call for the release of the prisoners of the social revolt is an attempt to dissipate a volatile situation that can easily erupt and that they may not be able to control.

In opposition to this type of reactionary petty-bourgeois politics, the genuine Trotskyists of the International Committee of the Fourth International fight to forge the political independence of the working class through the fight for a socialist and internationalist program and to make workers conscious of their immense social power and historic mission, which is to overthrow capitalism and the nation-state system.



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